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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the phenomenon of private-practice teachers in public schools. It helps frame the debates surrounding market-driven reforms that are aimed at freeing schools from bureaucratic control and raises several questions about the potential impact of private-practice teachers. It asks whether market-driven reforms within public schools allow for a new type of teacher professionalism, whether privatization efforts for teachers are replacing public bureaucracies with private bureaucracies, and whether there are competing conceptions of professionalism that are better suited to new organizational arrangements. The paper draws on the results of recent privatization efforts to study the complex intersection between teacher professionalism and school organization. It claims that the debate concerning private-practice teaching is central to understanding school improvement, positing that private-practice teachers will be in greater demand to meet widespread teacher shortages. The paper looks at school organization and teacher professionalization and how these affect each other, paying special attention to teacher professionalization, what is meant by that term, and the impact market pressures will bring to bear on the balance and nature of bureaucratic versus professional control. (Contains 46 references.) (RJM)

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PRIVATE PRACTICE TEACHERS IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS: REEXAMINING TENSIONS BETWEEN PROFESSIONALISM AND BUREAUCRATIC CONTROL

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PRIVATE PRACTICE TEACHERS IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS: REEXAMINING TENSIONS BETWEEN PROFESSIONALISM AND BUREAUCRATIC CONTROL

Widespread school reform initiatives during the past decade have been concerned with transforming schools from the bureaucratic monopolies of the past toward more market-driven, responsive institutions. Starting with the publication of Chubb and Moe's *Politics, Markets and America's Schools,* through the provision of vouchers to low-income children, policy makers, reformers, politicians and educators argue that schools need to be freed from centralized rules and bureaucratic regulations. Although much of the attention to market-driven' initiatives centers around parental choice, advocates of reliance on market forces also suggest that school improvement rests with a professional teaching core-- an element of reform that can only emerge when public schools are freed from overly regulated and controlled public bureaucracies. Less bureaucratic schools are crucial to enable teachers to be professionals. In a more professional school environment, teachers can innovate, diversify the curriculum, and offer varied instructional strategies (Witte, 1991; Chubb and Moe, 1990).

The renewed emphasis on teacher professionalism advances a wide range of changes including greater participation in administrative decisions, the development of a stronger knowledge base", higher standards, more accountability, and increased teacher collaboration and community (Little & McLaughlin; 1993; Lieberman, 1988). All these changes are rooted in the belief that teachers in less constrained school environments can be more responsive to children and their families.

Contracting out specific services to private vendors, such as transportation, food services and maintenance is not particularly radical or new. What is new, however, is the application of this concept to teaching (Goldring & Sullivan, 1995). Private firms, such as Sylvan Learning and Berlitz, contract with public schools to provide teachers. In Chicago for example, a private firm contracts with the Chicago Public Schools to supply reading teachers for twenty-two schools. These teachers are employees of the private firm, not the school system. The implementation of private practice teaching within public schools is on the rise. The growth of this industry enjoyed a 30 percent increase this past year. For example, Sylvan Learning Center's division of contract services with schools increased their revenues by 34% last year (Walsh, 1999). Further evidence of continued growth is The Association of Educators in Private Practice (AEPP). A professional network of educators dedicated to advancing the idea of private-practice teaching, AEPP was founded in 1990 with six members, and has grown to 600 members.

Analysts suggest that not only will private practice teachers continue to meet the market predictions of increased privatization in education, but will also continue to fill a void driven by a shortage of traditionally trained and hired teachers. As more and more districts, especially urban centers, face teacher shortages in specific academic subjects, these firms can supply the demand. New York City, for example, is relying on teachers provided by Berlitz, Sylvan and Kaplan to fill teaching positions.

This paper examines the phenomena of private practice teachers in public schools. We can no longer expect that the majority of teachers will continue to be contracted directly with

public school bureaucracies. Privatized teaching may provide new mechanisms for integrating professionals into public bureaucracies and may also raise questions about new avenues for school improvement and meeting the needs of children. Predictions suggest that private practice teachers will be in greater and greater demand to coincide with widespread teacher shortages and the expanding education industry, as well as continued experimentation with privatization in education. In a recent article in Education Week Gerald Grant (1999) predicted that schoolteachers "will slowly break out of long-established bureaucratic hierarchies and share more of the autonomy previously enjoyed by members of the high-status professions" (p. 47). This paper helps frame the debates surrounding market-driven reforms that are aimed at freeing schools from bureaucratic control and raises several questions about the potential impact of private-practice teachers. Do market-driven reforms within public schools allow for a new type of teacher professionalism? Are privatization efforts for teachers essentially replacing public bureaucracies with private bureaucracies? Are there competing conceptions of professionalism that are more suited to new organizational arrangements?

Background

Recent privatization efforts that contract out instructional services through private practice teachers provide a unique opportunity to study the complex intersection between teacher professionalism and school organization. Teacher professionalism is central to improving education for all students. However, some blame bureaucratic rules and regulations for inhibiting the professionalization of teachers (Hill, Pierce, Guthrie; 1997) because of an enduring dilemma of school organization--the professionalism of teachers who work in bureaucratic schools. The importance of freeing schools from bureaucratic constraints is part of an enduring dilemma of school organization: the dilemma of professionalism (Ogawa, Crowson, & Goldring , 1999). A dilemma is

". . . the paradox of confronting conflicting positions, both of which are, or can be true" (Ogawa et. al., 1999, p.278). Dilemmas are rooted in commitments to competing core values " . . .when constraints and uncertainty make it impossible for any prized value to triumph" (Cuban, 1992, p. 6).

School organizations have been termed "tangled hierarchies", complicated intertwining between bureaucratic management and teacher professionalism (Shedd & Bacharach, 1991). This dilemma is rooted in complex, competing operating norms for schools. Teacher professionalism rests upon the ability of individual teachers to apply specialized knowledge and expertise to meet student needs, while bureaucracies require compliance to rules and regulations. Teacher professionalism requires that teachers identify with the norms of their colleagues and professional associations, while bureaucracies require conformity with organizational directives and commitment to the school system. Teacher professionalism calls for autonomy and widespread involvement in decision making, while bureaucracies rely on managerial control. In short, "dilemmas of control, autonomy and 'order' pit chain-of-command needs against the local, and uniquely professional structures that develop informally to solve local problems. Dilemmas of occupational status, of career, and of equity often pit compliance with administrative polices and procedures against professional norms" (Ogawa et. al., p.283).

Until recently, much of the research on the dilemma of bureaucracy and teacher professionalism relied on secondary data analyses, such as High School and Beyond and National Assessment of Educational Progress, research on private schools, and public school choice options, such as magnet schools and charter schools (see Chubb & Moe, 1990; Smrekar & Goldring, 1999).

Currently, there is a newer trend in market-driven reforms that provides a unique opportunity to study the interplay of bureaucracy and teacher professionalism: the contracting out of core

instructional services. Contracting out specific services to private vendors, such as transportation, food services and maintenance is not particularly radical or new. What is new, however, is the application of this concept to the actual 'core technology' of schooling, the instructional program. The privatization of instruction can take two forms: In one, a private practice teacher enters into an independent contract with a school or school system to perform specific instructional responsibilities. A much more prevalent option is when a private firm, such as Sylvan Learning or Berlitz, contracts with a school or school system to provide a specific instructional program, and the private firm hires teachers to work in the schools. These teachers are employees of the private firm, not the school system. The privatization of teaching has received much less attention than contracting out the entire management of a school (e.g., Edison's management of charter schools).

These newer privatization options, beyond providing new avenues for educational reform and school improvement, are changing the very nature and fabric of schools as social organizations. Teachers are no longer exclusively employees of public, monopolistic bureaucracies, but can now be members of a wide array of other types of organizational arrangements. Randell (1992) explains that private practice teaching involves "sole practitioner educators, teacher partnerships, educational service corporations and charter schools formed by teachers" (p. 3)

A scan of the field suggests that most private practice teachers are contracting through private educational corporations, rather than through individual contracts. Furthermore, most private educational corporations with private practice teachers provide instructional services to schools to fill specific areas of need: Reading instruction to at-risk students, foreign language instruction, and science instruction risk students (Success Lab) and science instruction (Techno Kids constant. Below is a brief description of some of the agencies providing private practice teachers to urban public

schools:

Techno-kids: Located in Washington, DC, *Techno-kids* provides science instruction to elementary school children mainly in the Washington DC areas. The specific curricula materials were developed and field-tested by the founder and owner of techno-kids. *Techno-kids* has contracts with both public and parochial schools.

Success Lab: The City of Chicago contracts with *Success Lab* to provide reading instruction in eight elementary schools. Each school has four- to - five private practice teachers, for a total of approximately 40 teachers.

Berlitz Jr.: A division of Berlitz foreign language instruction, *Berlitz Jr.* holds contracts with dozens of school districts across the US to teach foreign languages to elementary school students. The large majority of their contracts are for Spanish teachers, although they teach many other languages such as Japanese, French and German.

School Organization and Teacher Professionalism

The introduction of private practice teaching in public schools provides a naturally occurring opportunity to examine how the presence of the market affects the relationship between the bureaucratic control of schools and the professionalism of teachers. According to Shedd and Bacharach (1991) public schools are "tangled hierarchies" where an interweaving of bureaucratic management and professionalism produces cross-pressures and compromises between coordination and discretion. Blau and Scott (1962) explain that bureaucracy and professionalism provide alternative and thus competing solutions to the problem of rationalizing a field of action. The rationality of bureaucracy lies in compliance with organizational rules and regulations; the rationality

of professionalism lies in the reliance of teachers on expertise. Bureaucracies require conformity with the formal goals and directives of the organization; professionalism requires that teachers identify with the norms of their colleagues and professional associations. Bureaucracies rely on managerial control exerted through the chain-of-command; teacher professionalism calls for autonomy and wide-spread involvement in decision-making.

Educational reform in the United States has brought the issue of bureaucratic control versus teacher professionalism to a head. Competing reform camps have proposed very different reform strategies, both of which focus on the intersection of school organization and professionalism but arrive at contradictory solutions. Some reformers promote strategies that call for changing, or restructuring the bureaucratic organization of schools to enhance and capitalize on the professionalism of teachers. Others, however, promote various choice arrangements, including voucher plans and charter schools, arguing that only market forces can loosen the bureaucratic stranglehold that limits the discretion and, thus, the creativity of professionals.

Teacher professionalism

While teacher professionalism is a recurrent theme of school reform and improvement, the precise meaning of teacher professionalism is less stable. A review of the various conceptions suggests two major perspectives on teacher professionalism: one emphasizing the autonomy of professionals and another focusing on the community of professionalism.

Individual Autonomy. A dominant, classical view of teacher professionalism is rooted in a traditional conception of what distinguishes professions from occupations. According to this view, professions are characterized by structural and attitudinal aspects (Hall, 1968). The structural aspects of a profession include a full time work, specialized training, professional associations, and a code of

ethics (Wilensky, 1964). The attitudinal aspects of a profession include the use of the professional organization as a major reference, a belief in public service, self-regulation, a sense of calling, and autonomy. The presumption of this view is that a highly professionalized occupation entails a large degree of both structural and altitudinal aspects.

Much has been written about these professional aspects as applied to teaching. The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards emphasizes the professional commitments of teachers, stating, "chief among these are a body of specialized, expert knowledge together with a code of ethics emphasizing service to clients" (p. 6). Teachers are expected to implement expertise, specialized knowledge and skills, acquired through formal training, socialization, and experience.

Reform efforts geared toward changing "the occupational situation of educators" (Elmore, 1990) by increasing entry conditions and professional standards are rooted in traditional conceptions of the teaching profession. These reform efforts focus on teachers' demonstrated knowledge, assessed through external examinations, teacher certification and licensure, and structured career opportunities (Little, 1993). Much of the attention on teacher expertise and credentials is focused on the need for professional judgment of experts. "Teaching is nonroutine work that requires considerable expertise in accommodating diverse learners and in pursing a complex ambitious agenda of learning" (Sykes, 1991, p. 61).

A cornerstone of the classic conception of teacher professionalism, therefore, is a certain level of individualism that is linked to teacher professional autonomy. This was clearly articulated in Lortie's (1975) seminal work and reinforced in more recent research (Moore Johnson, 1990). Teachers ".... are expected to make individual assessments and decisions about students. Such work with people involves considerable judgment" (Lortie, 1975, p. 167). Rowan (1994) examined the

teaching occupation in relation to other occupations and concluded that teachers do not "exchange ideas, information, and opinions with others...to arrive jointly at decisions, conclusions or solutions" (p. 9). In most cases, judgments are based on individual assessments and interactions between teacher and student.

Professional Communities. A more recent view of teacher professionalism, referred to as the "new professionalism" (Hargreaves, 1994), conceptualizes teaching as part of a communal endeavor, moving away from the important individual autonomy emphasized in traditional views of teacher professionalism. The communal view of teacher professionalism is evident in many of the latest reform efforts. The new professionalism is moving "...away from the teachers' traditional professional authority and autonomy towards new forms of relationships with colleagues, with students and with parents. These relationships are becoming closer as well as more intense and collaborative" (Hargreaves, 1994, p.424). Reform efforts that change the nature of teaching, from individual-autonomous activities to collaborative, communal activities, signify the shift. New teachers are mentored instead of supervised, teams of teachers replaces hierarchies, in-service education has given way to continuous professional development, and partnerships, rather than liaisons, are central to professionalism (Hargreaves, 1994). However, it is important to note, as has Sykes (1999) and others (Little, 1990), the specific dimensions, relationships and conceptions of teacher professional community are emerging and thus are ambiguous and complex.

The communal aspect of teacher professionalism has been highlighted in recent studies. McLaughlin & Talbert (1993) found that "teachers' responses to today's students and notions of good teaching practice are heavily mediated by the character of the professional communities in which they work" (p.8). Little and McLaughlin (1993) are careful to note that professional community does not

necessarily emerge from the whole school. Teachers are members of various communities, ranging from in-school groups, such as departments and grade levels, and out-of-school groups, such as district level associations, professional networks, and subject matter associations. A professional community is defined in terms if its boundaries of inclusiveness, level of activity, and culture. Furthermore, professional community includes levels of collegiality, teaching and learning opportunities, innovativeness, and professional commitment (McLaughlin & Talbert, 1993).

Sykes (1991) describes the school as the locus for professional communities for teachers. He posits specific principles to guide the development of school-wide teacher professional communities, such as implementing school based professional standards, creating opportunities for professional socialization within schools, and providing for lateral connections between teachers concerning the construction and coordination of the curriculum. Similarly, in her research on teachers, Moore Johnson (1990) describes the need for school based collegiality or community. Teachers she interviewed discussed the importance of school-based community to meet personal, instructional and organizational needs.

School bureaucracy

A classical view of organizations emphasizes the function of formal structure in shaping the work activity and relations of organizational participants. Structures are the patterned aspects of the actions of and interactions between participants in organizations. In his seminal conceptualization of the ideal-type bureaucracy, Weber (1947) refines this by explaining that technical specialization and a division of labor establishes rational bases for work activity and relations in organizations. In addition, Weber identifies many characteristics of bureaucracies, including two types of formal structure: a) written rules and regulations and b) a hierarchy of authority. Influenced by this

conceptualization of organization, many scholars have studied how formal structures--or, the written rules and regulations established by the organizational hierarchy--affect the work activity and relations of organizational participants.

Formal, bureaucratic structures abound in school organizations. Written rules and regulations specify work activities in the form of specific outcome measures, job descriptions, curriculum guides and instructional programs and the like. Formal structures also shape work relations as in the assignment of teachers to sequentially age-graded classes, school bell schedules and calendars, teacher teams and the like. Finally there remains a hierarchical order in public schools, where boards of education and site councils adopt rules, regulations and programs and administrators develop and/or implement the same.

Research on the influence of the formal structure of school organization on teachers provides two very divergent views. On the one hand, research demonstrates that bureaucratic structures greatly restrict teacher's work activity. Scholars of widely varying perspectives conclude that the authority of teachers has been eroded by the bureaucratization of schools. For example, Sykes (1990) observes, "school days today *are* rule days" (p. 64), noting that federal, state and local policies have sought to reduce and direct teachers' discretion. Similarly, Chubb and Moe (1990) attribute the low performance of some schools in part to constraints imposed by bureaucratic constraints on teacher professionalism. And, Clandinin and Connelly's (1996) work on narrative reveals that teachers experience the press of the "sacred" world of policy.

On the other hand, studies suggest that formal structures have only limited impact on teachers, particularly in the domain of work activity. Studies of policy implementation (Cohen, 1982; McLaughlin, 1987) demonstrate that teachers' instructional practices are guided more by individual

decisions and inherited practices than by formal programs and policies. Elmore, Peterson and McCarthy's (1996) recent study of the impact of school restructuring on the instructional practices of teachers similarly reveals that the link is "weak, problematic and indirect" (p. 237). Clandinin and Connelly's (1996) work indicates that teachers shield the "secret" world of their classrooms by telling "cover stories" that obscure inconsistencies between the "secret and "sacred".

A final hallmark of formal structure is the attendant hierarchy of authority. Here, again, research sends a mixed message. Research on site-based management indicates that the diffusion of authority varies widely and rarely provides local stakeholders, including teachers, with much discretion over issues of program, personnel or finances (Malen, Ogawa & Kranz, 1990). Research on teacher leadership, however, suggests that in the presence of certain conditions teachers can alter their relations with administrators and increase their influence in the school arena (Smylie & Brownlee-Conyers, 1992).

Thus, previous research suggests that the relationship between the bureaucratic structures of schools and teacher work activity and relations is complex. It reveals, at the very least, that the impact of formal structures on teachers varies widely. The proposed study provides a direct examination of one aspect of this relationship: the impact of market pressures on the balance and nature of bureaucratic versus professional control.

Two issues concerning the structure of organizations should be noted, although neither will be addressed in the proposed study. One, theorists disagree as to the source or purpose of formal structure, variously arguing that organizations develop structure to enhance technical efficiency (e.g., Thompson, 1967), establish social legitimacy (e.g., Meyer & Rowan, 1977) or serve the political interests of constituents (Moe, 1989). The present study will not assess the origins of formal

structure, but take structure as a given and examine its impact on teachers' work activity and relations. Two, organization theory has long acknowledged that informal structures, which arise from the natural social interactions among organizational members, also affect activity and relations. The proposed study will focus on formal rather than informal structure because it is the former that policy makers establish and reshape in attempting to reform and improve schools.

Market-place schools and teacher professionalism

Today, with increasing market approaches to educational reform, the market is now at the 'level of the teacher'. One of Dan Lortie's (1969) criteria for professionalism, "how the teacher relates to the market", is now timely and relevant. Certainly, teachers have many more choices for practicing their profession than in the past. Charter schools, private schools, alternative schools and now, private practice teaching, all provide alternatives to the public schools. These different market arrangements provide varying degrees of professional autonomy to teachers in theory if not in practice (Chubb and Moe, 1990).

Data from a recent survey of charter school teachers across ten states suggest, the large majority of teachers "appear more interested in educational quality and professional/entrepreneurial opportunities than salary and convenience." (Vanourek, Manno, Finn and Bierlein, 1998, p. 200). For example, 76 percent of the respondents indicated that having more teaching authority was a factor in their decision to teach in a charter school. Similarly, 74% mentioned less bureaucracy as a reason. Similar findings are reported from research comparing private and public school teachers. Godwin, Kmerer and Martinez (1998), in their study of San Antonio's choice program, including private and public schools with students from a privately funded voucher program, report that private school teachers with voucher students "have greater autonomy and influence in their schools" (p. 289).

Similarly, private school teachers have fewer regulations and less bureaucratic intervention than their public school colleagues. Catholic school teachers also report more influence over school matters than public school teachers (Bryke, Lee & Holland, 1993).

Another aspect of professionalism in a market-place is the time and opportunities provided for teachers for professional development. In Edison schools, for example, all teachers are given the following: two periods free per day for planning, teachers are organized in teams, with a lead teacher for each team, access to an online professional development network, and four to six weeks training before the start of school (Chubb, 1998).

These types of professionalism in market place schools are not consistently reported. A recent study of charter schools in California found that teachers do report a heightened sense of professionalism in terms of being more empowered and more in control (UCLA, 1999). However, there did not seem to be any link between increased professionalism and classroom teaching. "Most teachers could not say what it was they do in a charter school that they could not have done in a regular public school, indicating that their new professional identity may be based on factors other than their teaching practice" (p. 51). Similarly, in a study of school choice in England, Halpin, Power and Fitz (1997) did not find increased autonomy for teachers in Grant Maintained schools, schools that have opted out of the public school system. They concluded, "We have no data to suggest that the advent of GM status results in classroom teachers having a greater material control over educational activities..." (p. 62). They suggest that the balance of power has shifted away from those who teach and moved to those who mange.

The increasing prevalence of private practice teachers in public schools and the growing consensus that teacher professionalism is central to improving education for all students leads to

many important questions. For example:

1. Why do the public school systems seek the services of private practice teachers?
2. What are the conditions outlined in contracts between public schools and for-profit educational firms, including the responsibilities of private practice teachers?
3. What are the necessary credentials, training and professional development for private practice teachers?
4. How do privatized teachers and their contracting agencies view their roles vis a vis the larger school bureaucracy?
5. What are the boundaries of the contracting agencies' and private practice teachers' control, influence and autonomy?
6. How does each party conceptualize professional community in the contracting arrangement? What opportunities exist for professional community?
7. How do private practice teachers understand and enact teacher professionalism? How is this different than public school teachers? (What levels of professionalism--discretion, autonomy, commitment, innovation, and sense of community--are experienced by private practice teachers?)
8. Are differences in the levels and types of professionalism experienced by public school and privatized teachers attributable to the attenuation of bureaucratic control by market considerations?

Conclusion

Private practice teaching is a relatively new phenomenon. Research in this arena will enhance our knowledge of new organizational arrangements in public education. It will help inform the

debates surrounding market-driven reforms that are aimed at freeing schools from bureaucratic control. Do market-driven reforms within public schools allow for a new type of teacher professionalism? Are privatization efforts essentially replacing public bureaucracies with private bureaucracies? Are there competing conceptions of professionalism that are more suited to new organizational arrangements?

The debate concerning private practice teaching is central to understanding school improvement today. First, it is important to describe an emerging and potentially important form of privatization in public education. This exposure will familiarize policy makers and administrators and perhaps some teachers with opportunities and pitfalls presented by contracting the services of private practice teachers. Second and more specifically, this arena can help reveal variations in the services and arrangements provided by different types of agencies. Such information could prove useful to policy makers and administrators who contemplate pursuing this privatization strategy. Third, information regarding the relationship between public schools, for-profit agencies and teacher professionalism may inform broader policy discussions regarding the enhancement of the professional status of teachers as a strategy of educational reform and improvement. We can no longer expect that the majority of teachers will continue to be contracted directly with public school bureaucracies. This trend is complicated in education by the dilemma of professionalism. Privatized teaching may provide a new theory for integrating professionals into bureaucracies.

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